

the
GREENWICH VILLAGE ORCHESTRA
BARBARA YAHR, MUSIC DIRECTOR

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2019

3:00PM

ALL SAINTS CHURCH, NYC



2018-2019 SEASON
ORCHESTRAL BRILLIANCE

A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Greetings!

The GVO is proud to present our 2018–2019 Season at beautiful and historic All Saints Church. We are excited to share the stage with stellar soloists from around the country and talent from within the GVO itself. With works by composers from Chris Brubeck, Franz Schubert, Samuel Barber, Gustav Holst, and more, we are thrilled to present a season that explores the many facets of what an orchestra can be. This orchestra is a labor of love for all of us, and we enjoy nothing more than sharing the fruits of our labors with you, our audience.



— Barbara Yahr
Music Director

SUPPORT THE ORCHESTRA

Established in 1986, the GVO is a symphony orchestra composed entirely of volunteers. By day, we are accountants, artists, attorneys, carpenters, editors, physicians, professors, programmers, psychologists, retirees, scientists, secretaries, teachers, and writers. As musicians, we are dedicated to bringing the best possible performances of great music to our audiences and are committed to serving the community while keeping our ticket prices affordable.

The GVO operates on a lean budget — our concerts would not be possible without generous donations from our audience and our musicians. A gift of any amount enables the orchestra to:

- Hire our fabulous Music Director, Barbara Yahr;
- Attract talented soloists;
- Perform outreach concerts in hospitals and community centers;
- Develop and enhance our *Together in Music* initiative, which makes music accessible to children and families with special needs.

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- In person at the box-office
- Online at www.gvo.org/support
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non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

PROGRAM ORDER

Sunday, April 7, 2019 at 3:00pm

All Saints Church, 230 East 60th Street, NYC

Barbara Yahr, Music Director and Conductor

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Nocturnes

Nuages

Fêtes

Eric Mahl, *conductor*

Chris Brubeck (b.1951)

Prague Concerto for bass trombone and orchestra

1. *Return of the Prince*
2. *Song of the Mountains*
3. *Dance of the Neocons*

George Curran, *bass trombone*

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Prelude (Act I)

Presentation of the Silver Rose (Act II)

Baron Ochs' Waltz (Act II)

"Ist ein Traum" (Act III)

Waltz (reprise)

There will be no intermission in this program

Please silence phones and other devices

Flash photography is not permitted during the performance

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Debussy, *Nocturnes*

Debussy's first sketches for his *Nocturnes* (originally intended for violin and orchestra) date back to 1892, before he had become famous, almost overnight, for the *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*, but he only began to work on the score in earnest in 1897. Progress was made in fits and starts, and always with unusual difficulty. The following year was particularly rough: Debussy was hounded by creditors; discouraged that his works were regularly overlooked; irritated by the success of Fauré's incidental music for Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande* (while his own opera on the same subject sat in limbo); and wounded by the breakup with his longtime mistress, Gaby Dupont. The nocturnes suffered along with the composer and, after they were finally completed, he told his publisher that they "have given me more trouble than the five acts of *Pelleas*." Debussy was perfectly frank about the cause: "The three nocturnes have been infected by my private life, first full of hope, then full of despair, and then full of nothing! I've never been able to work at anything when my life's going through a crisis; which is, I think, why memory is a superior faculty, because you can pick from it the emotions you need. But those who write masterpieces in floods of tears are barefaced liars."

Although the *Nocturnes* don't reveal the turmoil in Debussy's private life at the time—nor the difficulty he had writing them—they are, as he freely admitted, reflections of personal experiences. The idea for *Nuages* (*Clouds*) came to him one particularly calm night as he stood on the Solféрино bridge, watching the clouds passing across a moonless sky and reflected by the Seine, "without a ripple, like a tarnished mirror." *Fêtes* (*Festivals*) was inspired by walking through the Bois de Boulogne, where Debussy caught glimpses of distant lights and swarming crowds.

— © Phillip Huscher

The title *Nocturnes* is to be interpreted here in a general and, more particularly, in a decorative sense. Therefore, it is not meant to designate the usual form of the Nocturne, but rather all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests. *Nuages* renders the immutable aspect of the sky and the slow, solemn motion of the clouds, fading away in grey tones lightly tinged with white. *Fêtes* gives us the vibrating, dancing rhythm of the atmosphere with sudden flashes of light. There is also the episode of the procession (a dazzling fantastic vision), which passes through the festive scene and becomes merged in it. But the background remains resistantly the same: the festival with its blending of music and luminous dust participating in the cosmic rhythm.

— Claude Debussy

Brubeck, Prague Concerto

In January, 2003, I had the honor of playing my first Concerto for Bass Trombone and Orchestra with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra in the Rudolfinum, the grand old "Carnegie Hall" of Prague. The European audience responded with great excitement to the piece, which sounded undeniably American in style. At a post-concert celebration, I was

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

sharing a beer with Jan Hasenohrl, founder of the CNSO, and he asked me if I would come back the following year to premiere a new trombone concerto.

A year later, I was back in Prague, happy to fulfill a promise made premiering The Prague Concerto for Bass Trombone and Orchestra. Seeing as I was going to play with a European orchestra, I started with a more traditional march-like theme in 4/4 ("The Return of the Prince"). However, by the time I was through developing it, the inevitable influences of jazz crept in. My upbringing in a household filled with the playing of odd time signatures always leads me instinctively to throw in some unpredictable measure of odd meters to keep everyone on their toes. In the middle of the first movement a gospel/funk theme is introduced. It eventually transforms into a recapitulation of, and variations on, the first main theme.

The second movement ("Song of the Mountains") begins with an antiphonal trio consisting of flute, French horn and bassoon. The *andante* theme is stated by the trombone solo and then handed over to the first chair cellist. A jazz/latin bass ostinato figure forms the basis of the next section. After some melodic detours the original theme returns for the soloist.

The third movement ("Dance of the Neocons") is filled with tricky time signatures based on a *presto* 7/8 subdivided (3+2+2) which often will "reverse" into a subdivision of (2+2+3). The middle part of the movement features an extended section in 10/8 which is subdivided in many different patterns finally relaxing into a fluid 5/4 jazz section. The incessant pattern of (2+2+3+3) is re-introduced and culminates into a loose cadenza section. An onslaught of time signatures ranging from 4/4 to 11/4 to a jazz waltz follows, setting up the return of the antiphonal trio and the opening 7/8 theme. Many of the third movement themes are re-introduced, compressed, modulated and brought to a crescendo for the finale of the concerto.

After the incredible response to the concert, I recorded the piece in the Rudolfinum along with *Convergence*, a composition commissioned by the Boston Pops Orchestra. These pieces plus *River of Song*, which I wrote for Frederica von Stade, comprise the new Koch International Classics recording titled *Convergence*. It was my first experience in recording and mixing in surround sound and it's a thrilling way to capture the experience of a great orchestra in a wonderful historic hall.

— Chris Brubeck

Strauss, Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Richard Strauss cut his teeth in the art of musical storytelling through his extraordinary sequence of tone poems in the last years of the nineteenth century. In a way, they provided the ideal preparation for his career as an opera composer. And it was from this experience that he drew to craft the unforgettable musical characterizations of *Der Rosenkavalier*, which range from boisterous parody to subtle psychological nuance. Strauss also had the benefit of working with one of the most marvelously crafted librettos in the literature, thanks to his partnership with the poet/dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who had recently launched their legendary partnership by furnishing the libretto for the earlier *Elektra*.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Set in mid-eighteenth-century Vienna, *Der Rosenkavalier* was originally conceived as a period comedy inspired by Verdi's *Falstaff* as well as the comic panache of Molière's satires. The story's comic aspects center around the loutish, self-centered Baron von Ochs (a German name that means exactly what it sounds like in English) and his quest to win the beautiful Sophie von Faninal as a trophy bride (and ticket to a sizeable dowry). But the Baron's plans are foiled by the young Count Rofrano, known as Octavian. Octavian himself falls in love with Sophie (immediately reciprocated) when he meets her as bearer of the "silver rose" to announce Ochs' engagement. In fine comic fashion, the young count then orchestrates a plot to unmask his rival's true character.

But Octavian must also come to terms with his love for an older woman, the Marschallin, an aristocrat trapped in a loveless marriage, with whom he is engaged in a passionate affair at the very start of the opera. The Marschallin introduces an entirely new dimension of pathos and psychological nuance into the comedy and becomes its true central character. In fact it is she who arranges for Octavian to deliver Ochs' engagement token, thus securing her lover's first introduction to the younger woman she already intuitively will become her own rival. The perceptive Marschallin has decided to save Sophie from suffering the same fate that befell her at that age and is eager to thwart Ochs' scheme.

Strauss wrote the score for *Der Rosenkavalier* between 1909 and 1910, and the opera was premiered in January 1911. It made the already rich and famous composer into an even more wildly successful celebrity, becoming a phenomenon well beyond the opera house and generating an avalanche of "tie-in" merchandise. *Der Rosenkavalier* has also found a life in the concert hall. Along with its gestures of Mozartean homage, the score draws on the orchestral mastery Strauss had inherited from Wagner. This aspect comes to the fore in the purely instrumental suite we hear, the best known of numerous suites that have been extracted from the score over the years (most of which were not arranged by the composer himself). Strauss' own role in preparing this particular suite is murky; around the time it was introduced in New York, in 1944, he was fashioning a different suite of his own drawn mostly from the opera's waltzes. Conductor Artur Rodzinsky, who led the *Rosenkavalier* Suite's first performance, is usually cited as the party responsible for actually splicing it all together—though the composer likely consented to its publication the following year.

The Suite opens forcefully with the Prelude's jubilant horns, which evoke the teenage Octavian's passion for the Marschallin (who is approaching middle age). The music, alternately lush and heroic, includes one of the most graphic depictions of sex in the literature as the horns work to a climax, followed by a rosy, postcoital afterglow woven from leitmotifs representing the Marschallin and her reflections on aging. This jump cuts to the stunning scene in the second act that gives the opera its title ("The Knight of the Rose"), as Octavian undertakes his mission to present Baron Ochs' silver rose to Sophie. But the young pair themselves fall in love to music of rapturously soaring ecstasy.

A brief, chaotic interlude signals the intrusion of the lecher Ochs, who then dances with fatuous self-satisfaction to one of the waltzes that are such a recognizable part of *Der Rosenkavalier*'s sound world. Ever since the opera's premiere, pedantic critics have noted that the waltzes pervading the score are "anachronistic" for its period setting. But they never feel out of place amid Strauss' time-traveling homage to the great music of the past—including

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

parodies of *Tristan* and yes, loving nods to the (unrelated) “waltz king”—but all filtered through Strauss’ unmistakable style.

If the waltzes showcase the opera’s comic side, the great Trio near the end of the third act is the epitome of its bittersweet wisdom. How fitting that Strauss actually decelerates the waltz’s natural pace for this music, where the Marschallin, who had earlier been shown trying to stop time, renounces her lover. She acknowledges that Octavian and Sophie will be happier together, while they meanwhile marvel at their newfound love. After the Marschallin’s graceful exit, the pair continue with a duet of simple, fairy-tale charm. Capping the Suite is another of Ochs’ hedonistic waltzes from earlier in the act, which features some of Strauss’ most delirious modulations.

— © Thomas May

UP NEXT – “THE EARTH IN CONTEXT”

Sunday, May 19, 3:00pm at All Saints Church

Our season finale explores visions of our shared cosmos.

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Holst’s *The Planets* captures the universal.

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Harp

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* Off-stage trio member

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Barbara Yahr

Now in her seventeenth season with the GVO, Music Director Barbara Yahr continues to lead the orchestra to new levels of distinction. With blockbuster programming and internationally renowned guest artists, the GVO under Barbara's baton, has grown into an innovative, collaborative institution offering a rich and varied season of classical music to our local community.

A native of New York, Ms. Yahr's career has spanned from the United States to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Her previous posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Munich Radio Orchestra, Resident Staff Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony under Maestro Lorin Maazel and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared as a guest conductor with such orchestras as the Bayerische Rundfunk, Dusseldorf Symphoniker, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Janacek Philharmonic, New Japan Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, and the National Symphony in Washington D.C. She has also conducted the orchestras in Columbus, Detroit, Calgary, Chattanooga, Louisiana, Richmond, New Mexico, Lubbock, and Anchorage, as well as the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, New World Symphony, and the Chautauqua Festival Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared in Israel conducting in both Jerusalem and Eilat. As an opera conductor, she has led new productions in Frankfurt, Giessen, Tulsa, Cincinnati, Minnesota and at The Mannes School of Music in NYC. Most recently, she has coached the actors on the set of the Amazon Series *Mozart in the Jungle*, and in October 2016, she conducted the season opener of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra and led the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra musicians in a free concert of Dvorak and Mozart.



Ms. Yahr is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Middlebury College where she studied piano and philosophy. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music where she studied with Max Rudolf and an MM in Music Theory from the Manhattan School of Music. She was a student of Charles Bruck at the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine.

A central focus of Ms. Yahr's career has been her commitment to finding new ways to reach a broader population with music. This path ultimately led her to pursuing an MA in Music Therapy at NYU and training at the Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy in NYC. Her pioneering, community music therapy project, *Together in Music*, brings orchestral music to the special needs community with uniquely interactive programs presented annually by the GVO.

Barbara is married to Dr. Alexander Lerman and has two adult step children, Abe and Dania, and a 16 year old son, Ben.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

George Curran

George Curran became the bass trombonist of the New York Philharmonic in June 2013 after serving in that role with the orchestra during the previous season. Prior to that, he was a member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and a fellow with the New World Symphony.

Mr. Curran has participated in several recording projects recently, starting with an Atlanta Trombone Project recording titled *Roadwork*. This project resulted in the formation of the Southeast Trombone Symposium, an annual week-long summer workshop at Columbus State University (CSU). Following that recording, he was a soloist on a disc titled *A Beautiful Noise*, which featured prominent trombone soloists performing with the CSU Trombone Choir. In 2017, Mr. Curran released a full length solo album called *Vital Signs*, which contains works by Gillingham, Gershwin, Bourgeois, Pierce, and Verhelst.

Another CD, *Legacy*, was released concurrently by members of the Southeast Trombone Symposium, on which Mr. Curran is featured prominently throughout.



As a soloist, Mr. Curran has premiered several new works written for him, most importantly the title track of his solo CD. Written by David Gillingham and called *Vital Signs of Planet Earth*, Mr. Curran premiered the piece with the Central Michigan University Wind Ensemble, and has performed it several times since, including in Carnegie Hall. He was twice a soloist and judge at the Jeju International Wind Ensemble Festival in South Korea, and was a featured soloist and clinician at the prestigious Slide Factory in Rotterdam. This past year he was featured at several major workshops, including the International Trombone Festival, the Arctic Trombone Festival, and the Spanish Trombone Festival and Competition. Mr. Curran has also performed concertos with bands at the American Trombone Workshop and the Midwest Clinic in Chicago, as well as with many collegiate and local ensembles.

A native of Farmington Hills, Michigan, George Curran received his bachelor's degree in music education on euphonium from Central Michigan University and a master's degree in performance on bass trombone from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. His principal teachers have included John Rojak and Peter Norton. He is an S.E. Shires Trombone artist, and is on the faculty of Rutgers University, Manhattan School of Music, and Mannes School of Music.

www.lasttrombone.com

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Eric Mahl

Eric Mahl is the conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Third Street Music School Settlement, music director of the Western Connecticut Youth Orchestra, artistic director of the Harmony Program Youth Orchestra North and of the New Jersey Young Artists Ensembles, and the GVO's own assistant conductor. Mr. Mahl is a musician who believes in the transformative powers of music above all else. His hope is to provide meaningful, enriching and educational musical experiences to as many people as possible. Under the belief that the study of music is essentially an exploration of the human condition, and that classical music is infinitely beneficial for every human, he strives to cultivate an appreciation and understanding of music played with the highest possible level of artistry.



Mr. Mahl's dedication to contemporary music is evident in his many collaborations and commissions with professional and student composers, including the world premieres of fully staged operas, experimental ballet, and countless small and large ensemble pieces of all genres. While assistant conductor with Orchestre 21, Mr. Mahl was selected to act as assistant for the world premiere of Debussy's newly finished opera, *Le Diable dans le Belfroi*. He was also selected from over one hundred applicants to participate in the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary music Conducting Workshop, where he worked closely with Marin Alsop and James Ross. This past January, he was invited by the Chelsea Symphony to conduct the world premiere of Tim Kiah's *Song of Zippy*, as well as music by Bartok.

Mr. Mahl is a passionate educator, teaching all ages and instruments at a number of schools throughout the five boroughs of New York City, and frequently working with student musicians from underserved communities. He is a firm believer that music can provide a transformational experience for any child regardless of background, and attempts to engage and inspire students from as many cultural and geographic backgrounds as possible through various community engagement activities.

Mr. Mahl received his Bachelors of Music in Education from Ithaca College and continued his studies both at Universite de Montreal and the State University of New York at Fredonia, where he received his master's degree. He has studied with some of the foremost conducting pedagogues in the United States including Marin Alsop, James Ross, Harold Farberman, Neil Varon, Marc Gibson, Larry Rachleff, Don Schleicher, Jean-Francois Rivest, Paolo Bellomia, and Joeseeph Gifford. He has participated in workshops and competitions in the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic, at the Eastman School of Music, College Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, and Bard College. Mr. Mahl's primary instrument is the trumpet, although he is well-schooled in all the orchestral instruments. He continues to perform in orchestral, jazz, and chamber music settings. Mr. Mahl is an outdoor enthusiast, and accomplished cook, and an avid runner.

www.ericmahl.com

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